97-84097-19

Mallon, James Joseph

Extending the Trade Boards Act

[London]

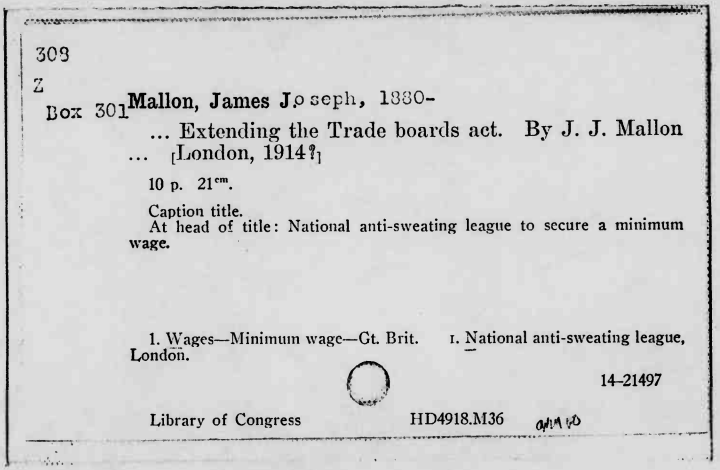
[1914?]

97-84097-19
MASTER NEGATIVE #

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
PRESERVATION DIVISION

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MICROFORM TARGET

ORIGINAL MATERIAL AS FILMED - EXISTING BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD



309
Z
Box 301 Mallon, James Joseph, 1880-
... Extending the Trade boards act. By J. J. Mallon ... [London, 1914?]
10 p. 21cm.
Caption title.
At head of title: National anti-sweating league to secure a minimum wage.

1. Wages—Minimum wage—Gt. Brit. 1. National anti-sweating league, London.

14-21497

Library of Congress HD4918.M36

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: Reproductions may not be made without permission from Columbia University Libraries.

TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm REDUCTION RATIO: 9:1 IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 5/23/97 INITIALS: TM / PB

TRACKING # : MSH 24144

FILMED BY PRESERVATION RESOURCES, BETHLEHEM, PA.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC IRREGULARITIES

MAIN ENTRY: Mallon, James Joseph

Extending the Trade Boards Act

Bibliographic Irregularities in the Original Document:

List all volumes and pages affected; include name of institution if filming borrowed text.

_____ Page(s) missing/not available: _____

_____ Volume(s) missing/not available: _____

__X__ Illegible and/or damaged page(s): p. 1-2 (wrinkled)

_____

_____ Page(s) or volume(s) misnumbered: _____

_____ Bound out of sequence: _____

_____ Page(s) or volume(s) filmed from copy borrowed from: _____

_____

_____ Other: _____

_____

_____ Inserted material: _____

TRACKING#: MSH24144

308
Z
Box 301

PRICE ONE PENNY.

National Anti-Sweating League

To Secure a Minimum Wage

34, MECKLENBURGH SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.

EXTENDING *the* TRADE BOARDS ACT.

BY J. J. MALLON

(*Member of all the Trade Boards so far established.*)

The Trade Boards experiment is about to take a great leap forward. In the trades already under Boards much tidying-up has still to be done: for instance, the smooth operation of the minimum rates among outworkers in the wholesale tailoring and paper boxmaking trades depends upon the possibility of compiling general minimum piece rates for them, a task upon which both Boards are now engaged. But about the substantial success of the Boards in their first application there is no longer any question. Everywhere they have succeeded in considerably raising the lowest levels of wages, in forwarding organisation among both employers and workers, and in diverse and subtle ways releasing and stimulating forces that make for the efficient and humane development of their trades. The case for an extension of the Trade Boards Act was therefore irresistible, and the Board of Trade did not contest it. Asked by the Great Demonstration held by the National Anti-Sweating League in Queen's Hall, in March last, to extend the Act to six specified trades, they agreed to extend it to five, ladies' tailoring being for the moment omitted because of the difficulty in disentangling it from the numerous other clothing trades that surround it. Of the five trades that remain, one because of a technical defect in the Provisional Order extending the Trade Boards Act to it, was

struck out by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, leaving only four. The extension remains impressive and courageous. Each of the new trades is complex in organisation, and all, save one, are widely dispersed. The new Boards, for these reasons, will not be brought easily into being, and their early operations will demand care and watchfulness. Moreover, in two of the trades separate Boards in accordance with Section 2 (1) of the Act will have to be constituted for Ireland. Thus the immediate creation of six additional Boards is undertaken; enough to show that the Board of Trade is developing the Act with all reasonable expedition and displaying gratifying determination and goodwill. One other striking feature of their action deserves to be at once noticed.

The Select Committee to which, in 1907, the Sweated Industries Bill was referred, reported in favour of Trade Boards for women homeworkers only. The limitation was criticised by well-informed bodies like the National Anti-Sweating League, the Women's Trade Union League and the Women's Industrial Council, and disregarded by the experienced advisors of the Board of Trade. How rightly the sequel shows. Trade Boards are too narrowly conceived of, and the facts of women's earnings in general too little appreciated by those who would thus fetter them. Sweating has no necessary connection with homework, nor does the usefulness of the Trade Boards end with increases of wages. Realising this, the Board of Trade took power to apply the Act generally, and in the present extension it has been exercised. So completely is the opinion of the Select Committee contemned that in two of the four additional trades, sugar confectionery and hollow-ware, no homeworkers are employed at all.

Let us now examine the trades about to be included, taking them in the order in which they appear in the Provisional Orders Bill of the Board of Trade.

I. **Sugar Confectionery and food preserving**; that is to say, the making of sugar confectionery, cocoa, chocolate, jam, marmalade, preserved fruits, fruit and table jellies, meat extracts, meat essences, sauces and pickles, the

preparation of meat, poultry, game, fish, vegetables and fruit for sale in a preserved state in tins, pots, bottles, and similar receptacles; the processes of wrapping, filling, packing, and labelling in respect of articles so made or prepared.

Here we have not one trade but a group closely commingling, though seldom carried on together under a single roof. About all of them we have happily a good deal of information. Take for instance the enquiry covering fruit preserving, pickle making, confectionery, coffee and cocoa packing, which opportunely the London Branch of the Christian Social Union has lately carried out in South East London: it tells us clearly of the conditions of the workers in these trades and furnishes authentic tables of present wages. Like every other such document the Report shows how widely even neighbouring factories may differ. Thus of a fruit preserving firm in "A" Class we read that its conditions are "excellent," its employees of "superior type" and "well looked after," while in a similar firm in "C" Class "men's work" is found to be carried on by women and girls, "pushing, lifting, and carrying heavy weights." This hard work repels all but the roughest women and we are told that the women employed, many of them married, are "indescribably filthy," a statement that knowing the factory well I can whole-heartedly endorse. In the confectionery section compare these reports:—

A. A very old established firm. Conditions excellent. Workers thoroughly well looked after. Wages good.

C. Bad conditions. Wet floors—girls complain of getting their skirts very wet. Very low class of worker. Wages very low.

Even were London only in question the Board would find room for fruitful work in the wide hiatus between these very different classes of firms. The gap is wider if with some very bad factories in S. E. London we compare certain well-known and fine-purposed businesses in the Northern and Midland Counties. From the worst factories in Bermondsey the sudden upheaval of 1911

brought out thousands of women of such poverty and wretchedness that but for the bread and sterilised milk provided by public donation they would have starved at the inception of their strike. The highest wages of workers in these factories would not reach the minimum which others freely concede.

In the Enquiry of the C.S.U. the average earnings of workers in the trades mentioned and in the tea packing and biscuit making trades (in which the lowest type of worker is not employed) are given as follows :—

	s.	d.
Girls, 14 years	4	9
Girls, 15 years to 18 years	6	4
Girls, 18 years and over	11	5
Married Women	8	11

We may profitably compare with these the still more authoritative figures of the Board of Trade Enquiry of 1906, which, however, apply to the whole of the United Kingdom :—

	Women (over 18) s.	d.	Girls s.	d.
Cocoa, Chocolate and Sugar Confectionery	11	9	6	7
Preserved Food, Jam, Pickle, Sauce, etc.	10	11	6	7

But what is wrong with a Trade is often concealed in average figures. Looking beneath them in this instance we find that in the first of the two given groups 40 per cent. of women received less than 10s., nearly 30 per cent. less than 9s., and actually one woman in five less than 8s. a week.

In the food preserving group the percentage receiving less than 10s. is higher, 44.3, but the other percentages are less.

But probably the most enlightening figures of the Board of Trade Enquiry are those in which the earnings of workers are classified in occupation groups :

		Women (over 18) Average Earnings s.	d.		Lower Quartile s.	d.
Confectionery workers ...	Time	9	1	...	7	6
	Piece	11	8	...	8	6
Chocolate workers	Time	9	2	...	7	0
	Piece	14	10	...	11	6
Weighers, Fillers, Wrappers, Labellers, Packers	Time	9	8	...	8	0
	Piece	11	8	...	8	6
Other women	Time	10	6			
	Piece	11	8			

The earnings of confectionery time workers (the predominant type in that trade) seem to me especially minute. Is it not incredible that one-fourth of these women should be in receipt of weekly earnings of *less* than 7s. 6d. Clearly the Trade Board can alter drastically these shameful rates of wages. But a word of caution has to be uttered. So far the several Boards have dealt almost entirely with women employed on piece, as to whom it is sufficient that they work at the piece rates actually fixed by the Trade Boards or at rates calculated to yield the equivalent of the time rate to the "ordinary" worker. In either case no sufficient motive is afforded for the dismissal of slow or deficient workers. The problem of the slow time worker is not so easily got over, and in the confectionery trade where, as I have said, she abounds, the special difficulty she presents will need delicate handling.

II. **Shirtmaking**; that is to say, the making from textile fabrics of shirts, pyjamas, and other washable clothing worn by male persons, excluding articles the making of which is included in paragraph 1 of the schedule in the Trade Boards Act, 1909, and excluding articles which are knitted or are made from knitted fabrics.

The description of the trade is puzzling. What it means is this: The Tailoring Trade Board having had to decide to what articles of clothing its rates were to apply, found that there is a point indicated by men's smocks and blouses at which tailoring and shirtmaking appear to merge. Much discussion ensued, but the line of separation is not yet clearly understood; meantime the Board of Trade can only say to the Shirtmaking Board that its scope will extend to the men's garments, whichever they are, that prove finally not to be tailoring. But be the boundary moved a little in one direction or in the other the trade is a considerable one.

It will not facilitate the work of the Board that so much of it is carried on in Ireland. Paper Box and Tailoring manufacturers in Great Britain are ill pleased that the minimum rates for their trades in Ireland should be a farthing per hour less than they have to pay. But in

these trades Irish competition is not important. In shirtmaking, of which Irish manufacturers are responsible for about one third, it is very important indeed.

As one would expect, shirtmaking has much in common with tailoring. It is carried on in the same centres, it has many grades so different in their circumstances that they amount to separate trades, and middlemen and middlewomen with home workers in plenty are entrenched in it. In one respect, however, it differs alike from tailoring or any other great trade, as substantially no men are engaged in it.

We turn now to wages, figures of which are given in the Report of the Board of Trade Enquiry already referred to.

Unfortunately the figures do not apply to shirtmaking alone, but also to blouses and underclothes: they must therefore be taken with a certain reserve. Another remark may be made of them: that they include the earnings of bespoke shirtmakers whose wages in London will often exceed 30s. Here are the figures:—

	Average Earnings	
	Women	Girls
	s. d.	s. d.
Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire	13 7	7 2
North and West, Midland Counties	13 5	6 5
London	15 10	7 2
Rest of England and Wales ...	13 1	6 10
Belfast	12 0	6 2
Londonderry	9 9	4 8
Rest of Ireland	10 3	6 9

The geographical evenness of earnings is remarkable. London is much higher than the other districts, but her flattering position is entirely due to the effect of the West End trade in which payments are exceptionally high. The uniformity of payments is really only broken by Ireland, where, away from Belfast, they are notably less than in Great Britain. Once more we shall find it profitable to look beneath average figures. In the trade as a whole, 21 per cent. of women receive less than 10s. a week, while among particular groups like the hand sewers less than 10s. is earned by one woman in three. Starchers and ironers are included in the tables and appear to fare very badly. In several districts a fourth

of them earn average wages of less than 8s. a week, while in Londonderry the same proportion do not receive as much as 6s. 6d. Some of the Irish figures are frankly appalling, and of the machine sewers there, one quarter earn less than 5s. 6d. a week.

Chief difficulty in this trade is presented by the home workers who abound in Ireland, London and Manchester. Fine hand work is widely distributed in country places in the North of Ireland, chiefly from Londonderry. In English towns it is mostly cheap shirts that go to homeworkers, by whom they are machined and returned to the factory or workshop whence they issue again to be "finished." Homeworkers' payments are not included in the Report of the Enquiry of the Board of Trade. What they amount to in East London one may, by a visit there, quickly learn for oneself. One may learn this also: much of the underpayment among homeworkers is attributable to the middlewomen, who in times of slack trade will take work at less than factory rates. In an instance lately brought to my notice such a woman contracted to make at 1s. 3d. a dozen shirts for which the factory price was 1s. 6d. The workers received 11d. at which rate only strenuous women could earn 7s. a week. In the factory, girls making these same shirts on power driven machinery earned without difficulty 15s. or 16s.

III. **Hollow-ware making**; that is to say, the making of hollow-ware (including boxes and canisters) from sheet iron, sheet steel or tin plate, including the processes of galvanising, tinning, enamelling, painting, japanning, lacquering and varnishing.

In this definition the parenthesis is important, and itself brings in a considerable trade, not an attractive one. Tin boxes are made throughout the country, but mostly in South East London. The work is hard and only girls of rougher class will undertake it. One doesn't wonder at its unpopularity after one has looked at the hands of many tin box workers. In some London factories scarce a girl has escaped scars and cuts, and she is lucky who has kept her fingers. Wages also, ranging from 8s. to in some cases 14s., are low. It is not marvellous that

discontent should smoulder and anon break out in such an industry. In recent years there have been several strikes of boxmakers in London, and these workers played a notable part in the agitation of two years ago. They are too poor to make good trade unionists, and though their revolts have won them amelioration, it has been lost when their momentary ardour cooled and their combination broke down. Tin boxes apart, it is not easy to explain hollow-ware. Kettles, buckets, vegetable dishes, baths, are simple cases, but what about, say, coal scuttles, and, if they are included, are shovels to be left out?

A further point of difficulty has been the attitude of the men engaged in the higher branches of the trade, who, through their complete and competent organisation have won high rates of wages. To these men the Trade Board could do little good, and they feared it might do them harm. In reality, however, the men have nothing to fear, and it is probable that the Board will concern itself exclusively with the payments of women.

What women hollow-ware workers (as apart from tin-box makers) earn in the Black Country, the chief centre of the trade, everyone knows. Only twelve months ago they won a minimum of 10s. at the sword's point, employers resisting the demand for several weeks, during which public generosity made the resistance of their workers effective. The wage is under any circumstances deplorably low. One marvels at it more when one has witnessed the exertions by which it is won. In a Black Country bucket shop the "stint" of a girl worker will be say the attaching of "1000" or "1500" bottoms per day. A rapid worker may pass through her nimble fingers in a week as many thousands of buckets as the shillings of her pay. Unlike the poorer London women the hollow-ware workers of the Stourbridge and Lye district are neat and well-connected girls, and they have shown their intelligence by the rapidity with which they became trade unionists. More than a thousand of them are staunch members of the National Federation of Women Workers which,

with the Trade Board as inducement, will have little difficulty in making its organisation among them complete.

IV. **Linen and cotton embroidery**; that is to say, those branches of the trade of making up articles of linen or cotton or mixed linen and cotton which are engaged in the processes of hand embroidery, drawn thread work, thread drawing, thread clipping, top sewing, scalloping, nickelling and paring.

About the work of the women to whom the Irish Linen and Cotton Embroidery Board will minister, the report of the Committee presided over by Sir Ernest Hatch tells all we need to know. Trivial operations carried on by innumerable women in their homes, wages of a half-penny, three-farthings, one penny per hour, work carried on at night, and participated in by tiny children—the ills of the trade are familiar to those who know such similar trades as hook and eye carding or lace-finishing. The resemblance of the Irish trade to that of lace-finishing is especially close, and after the problems of Nottingham, Belfast may be tackled almost light-heartedly. In two respects the situation is simpler there than in the lace centre: there are no middlewomen to watch, and the workers—frugal and sober women—are of altogether better quality than those of Nottingham. In Belfast, therefore, the Board should over-leap every impediment, provided that a piece rate that all can understand can be compiled. The task is not easy, for the range of work is wide and its variations subtle and numerous. I am sanguine that it will be accomplished.

GENERAL.

To these inadequate notes a few general words may be added. In all the trades above mentioned, the employers are not only not resisting the extension of the Act, they are cordially accepting it. Everywhere they are forming organisations which heretofore have not been possible. Organisation of employers is almost always good, and goes far to assure successful administration. A harder task is to organise workers who, of course, stand in greater need of it. But though difficult, the task is not

impossible and it will be one that the National Federation of Women Workers and the National Anti-Sweating League will undertake vigorously and with every hope of success.

It is to be noted that in at least three of the four trades the workers affected by the Act are almost wholly women, and in that fourth trade, hollow-ware, the men are sufficiently well organised to make it unnecessary for the Trade Board to concern itself on their behalf.

What are the numbers of workers in the different trades? There are no reliable statistics available, and any estimate is in the nature of a guess, but the following figures should not be wildly wrong:

Sugar Confectionery and Food Preserving ...	80,000
Shirt Making...	40,000
Hollow ware...	15,000
Linen Embroidery	5,000

Under the Act at the beginning were upwards of 250,000 workers. It will be seen that with the present additions the number included will approximate to 400,000, mainly women and girls: thus, to nearly one-fifth of all females employed in factories and workshops minimum rates of wages will soon apply.

National Anti-Sweating League

To Secure a Minimum Wage.

THE NATIONAL ANTI-SWEATING LEAGUE was formed at the close of the Queen's Hall Sweated Industries Exhibition in 1906 to secure minimum rates of wages for all underpaid workers. Its activity is carried on under three heads—

1. PROPAGANDA. The League organises Exhibitions of Sweated Goods and Workers. It holds demonstrations, distributes literature, lends lantern slides and collections of sweated exhibits, and supplies lecturers to interested societies.
2. INVESTIGATION. The League, directly and through its branches, carries out enquiries into existing conditions. Investigations into the London Clothing Trades, the Leicester Hosiery Trade, etc., have been carried out and the results published.
3. LEGISLATION. It is due to the League that the Trade Boards Act was passed. That Act at present affects nearly 400,000 workers, many of them miserably poor and helpless women and girls, for whom minimum rates of wages have or are being fixed. The League now informs and organises these workers, undertakes the presentation of their case upon the several Trade Boards, and sees that they actually receive the minimum wages that are fixed for them. Subsequently the League will endeavour to secure the application of the Act to additional trades.

For the development of the work of the League, money is urgently required. Sympathisers are asked to send Subscriptions or Donations to the Secretary (Mr. J. J. Mallon), National Anti-Sweating League, League House, 34, Mecklenburgh Square, London, W.C.

TO THE SECRETARY, NATIONAL ANTI-SWEATING LEAGUE,
34, MECKLENBURGH SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.

I approve of the objects of the NATIONAL ANTI-SWEATING LEAGUE *and wish to become a member. I promise to pay the sum of £ : : per annum, and enclose herewith my first subscription.*

Name .....
(In full, Rev., Mr., Mrs., or Miss)

Address .....

Date ....

MSH 241414

END OF
TITLE